

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 CIAE-00
INR-05 NSAE-00 SP-02 ACDA-10 L-01 IO-06 H-01
PA-01 ICA-01 /053 W
-----061519 262023Z /45

R 261950Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8054
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07801

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, GW, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT; BAHR VISIT TO MOSCOW

REFS: (A) BONN 7266; (B) MOSCOW 8063; (C) BONN 7123

1. A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF EGON BAHR TELLS US THE SPD
LEADER RETURNED FROM MOSCOW CONVINCED THE SOVIETS
EARNESTLY DESIRE PROGRESS ON DETENTE AND IN THE
DISARMAMENT FIELD.

2. OUR SOURCE CONFIRMED (REF C) A REPORT THAT BAHR WAS
AUTHORIZED TO DISCUSS BREZHNEV'S VISIT. HE STATED THAT
BAHR'S VISIT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN DESIGNED TO DISCUSS
THE POSSIBILITY OF SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN THE BRANDT
COMMISSION. BAHR HAD, HOWEVER, MET WITH THE CHANCELLOR
ON APRIL 16, THE DAY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW,
AND HAD BEEN GIVEN AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS MATTERS
RELATING TO THE BREZHNEV VISIT. (EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED
SIMILAR INFORMATION FROM A CONTACT IN THE CHANCELLOR'S
OFFICE.) OUR SOURCE CONFIRMED THAT GENSCHER ALSO HAD
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SPOKEN TO BAHR PRIOR TO HIS TRIP.

3. OUR SOURCE SAID BAHR'S 15-MINUTE COURTESY CALL ON
BREZHNEV HAD BEEN HIGHLIGHTED BY THE SOVIET LEADER
STRESSING HIS STRONG PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS
ON DETENTE. BREZHNEV IS SAID TO HAVE INDICATED THAT
HIS VISIT TO THE FRG SHOULD BE SEEN AS A SIGN OF HIS

EARNEST DESIRE TO MAKE SUCH PROGRESS. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, BREZHNEV SAID PROGRESS IN THE DISARMAMENT FIELD HAD NOT KEPT PACE WITH MOVEMENT ON THE POLITICAL SIDE OF DETENTE AND THERE WAS A NECESSITY TO REDRESS THE BALANCE.

4. BAHR AND BREZHNEV ALSO DISCUSSED THE WORK OF THE BRANDT COMMISSION (SEPTTEL).

5. BAHR'S ASSOCIATE TOLD US THE SPD LEADER'S TALKS WITH PONOMAREV CONVINCED HIM THAT THE SOVIETS ARE MOST ANXIOUS TO MAKE PROGRESS ON DISARMAMENT. PONOMAREV REPORTEDLY LEFT BAHR WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT MOSCOW, MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, WAS WILLING TO "TAKE RISKS" FOR PROGRESS IN THIS AREA. HE INDICATED THAT IF PRESIDENT CARTER WERE SIMILARLY INCLINED, MOVEMENT COULD COME QUICKLY.

6. OUR SOURCE SAID PONOMAREV HAD PARTICULARLY EXPRESSED THE NEED FOR A "POLITICAL IMPULSE" IN MBFR. THE SOVIET OFFICIAL HAD SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ACHIEVE CONCRETE RESULTS QUICKLY IN VIENNA. A POLITICAL DECISION TO DO SO WAS IMPERATIVE SINCE CONTINUING THE NEGOTIATION AMONG OFFICIALS WOULD CAUSE IT TO STAGNATE. PONOMAREV DID NOT GIVE SPECIFICS AS TO WHAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT BE PREPARED TO DO ON DISARMAMENT,
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INCLUDING MBFR, NOR DID HE COMMENT ON THE WESTERN INITIATIVE.

7. BAHR TOLD PONOMAREV THAT THE SS-20 AND OTHER "GRAY ZONE" WEAPONS SHOULD BE DISCUSSED IN A NEW DISARMAMENT FORUM. BAHR SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO GET A HANDLE ON THIS ISSUE QUICKLY. OUR SOURCE SAID PONOMAREV LISTENED ATTENTIVELY BUT DID NOT REPLY NOR DID HE GIVE ANY INDICATION THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD DISCUSS THE ISSUE DURING THE BREZHNEV VISIT TO BONN.

8. OUR SOURCE SAID BAHR ALSO VOICED HIS CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET TANK SUPERIORITY IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER AND IN GENERAL ABOUT A SOVIET CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY WHICH APPEARED TO EXCEED DEFENSIVE REQUIREMENTS. PONOMAREV IS SAID TO HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THIS GROWTH OCCURRED ONLY IN RECENT YEARS AND WAS NOT EXCESSIVE. BAHR REPORTEDLY WAS IMPRESSED BY THE MODERATE TONE AND ABSENCE OF PROPAGANDA IN PONOMAREV'S RESPONSE.

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9. CSCE WAS DISCUSSED ONLY marginally AND BREZHNEV'S
THREE PROPOSALS DID NOT COME UP.

10. COMMENT: WE ARE STRUCK BY THE COINCIDENCE BETWEEN
THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO BREZHNEV AND PONOMAREV AND
STANDARD SPD POSITIONS ON THESE SAME ISSUES. DURING
OUR CONVERSATION WITH BAHR'S ASSOCIATE, IT WAS AT TIMES
DIFFICULT TO DISCERN WHETHER WE WERE BEING GIVEN SOVIET
VIEWS OR THOSE OF EGON BAHR. WHEN WE PRESSED OUR
SOURCE ON CONCRETE SIGNS OF SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO MAKE
PROGRESS ON DETENTE, HE REPLIED ONLY THAT BAHR HAD COME
AWAY WITH A STRONG SENSE OF A SOVIET COMMITMENT, BY
VIRTUE OF REMARKS BY BREZHNEV AND PONOMAREV. WITH THE
QUESTIONABLE EXCEPTION OF BREZHNEV'S ANNOUNCEMENT NOT
TO PRODUCE ERW, HE WAS UNABLE TO CITE SPECIFIC
INDICATIONS OF POSSIBLE SOVIET INITIATIVES IN THE
DISARMAMENT FIELD.

WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT FRG PRESS SPOKESMAN BOELLING,
IN AN INTERVIEW ON THE BREZHNEV VISIT ON APRIL 22, ALSO
RAISED THE PROSPECT OF NEW SOVIET INITIATIVES IN THE
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DISARMAMENT FIELD. IN ADDITION BOELLING SAID THE FRG, ALONG WITH ITS NATO ALLIES, "SOUGHT IMPULSES IN MBFR." CONTINUING, BOELLING SAID "THE TIME IS RIPE FOR MAKING THESE IMPULSES CONCRETE." IN ANOTHER REFERENCE TO THE BREZHNEV VISIT, BOELLING SAID, "WE WANT TO CONCENTRATE ON A FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE MBFR DISCUSSIONS." A SENIOR CHANCELLERY OFFICIAL HAS ALSO INDICATED TO US THAT ARMS CONTROL MATTERS, INCLUDING MBFR, WOULD BE A MAJOR FOCUS OF THE GERMAN SIDE DURING THE BREZHNEV VISIT.

ON THE OTHER HAND, FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS TELL US THEY EXPECT NOTHING NEW FROM THE SOVIETS ON DISARMAMENT. THEY BELIEVE BREZHNEV IS LIKELY TO PRESENT OLD PROPOSALS REPACKAGED AS NEW IDEAS. THESE OFFICIALS TELL US BOELLING'S COMMENTS ON MBFR ARE PEGGED TO THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW WESTERN INITIATIVE AND THE HOPE THAT IT WILL PROVOKE A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION OF THE SUBJECT DURING BREZHNEV'S VISIT TO BONN. MEEHAN

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